

Michaud Pushes to Save Lifeline for Maine Workers Hurt by Trade

Tuesday, February 08 2011

Urges action to extend Trade Adjustment Assistance programs

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Mike Michaud joined his colleagues in sending a letter to House and Senate leaders urging them to pass an extension of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs, which are set to expire this weekend if no congressional action is taken. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 2,524 workers in Maine participated in TAA programs in 2010. As a percentage of the workforce, that ranks Maine as having the 6th highest rate of TAA participation in the nation.

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“These programs are a critical lifeline for those who have been displaced from their jobs as a result of our nation’s flawed trade policies,” said Michaud. “I urge my House and Senate colleagues to pass an extension of TAA quickly so that our nation’s workers don’t experience a lapse in benefits.”

The full text of the letter that Michaud and his colleagues sent today can be found below.

February 8, 2011

Dear House and Senate Leaders:

We write to urge immediate action on a long-term extension of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs.

For over 40 years, TAA has enjoyed strong bipartisan and bicameral support. TAA provides key support and guidance to American workers, businesses, farmers and communities impacted by international trade; it is an integral component of our economic recovery process and our participation in the global market. TAA helps workers develop new skills and pursue new career and life changes; it also shows businesses how to compete and thrive in new markets.

TAA has a proven track record of aiding Americans in the hardest hit regions of our country. In 2009, there was an outstanding, bipartisan leadership effort to improve and expand TAA. All sides came together to develop a stronger, targeted program for American workers, businesses, and farmers competing in a 21st century, global economy. The new program features expanded benefits, training, and resources to workers in both the services and manufacturing sectors, increased the Health Coverage Tax Credit subsidy, and reduced gaps in health coverage.

Trade Adjustment Assistance has long been a key component in ensuring that the best possible services are available to all American workers. As the new TAA improvements have been implemented, we have witnessed increasing assistance to those most affected by trade in a variety of sectors. The revised program benefited almost 170,000 new workers who

may have been ineligible for participation under the former structure.

Without the bipartisan improvements, the program would be less efficient, resulting in potential gaps in workers' coverage, decreased income assistance, and reduced benefits for older workers. Cutting-off these benefits and not allowing new workers and businesses -- that are just beginning to understand how outstanding the new programs are -- to participate in TAA would just add to the pressures on already distressed communities across the country.

Trade Adjustment Assistance is an integral component of any attempt to serve those struggling through no fault of their own. We truly hope that an immediate resolution can be reached for a long-term extension of this great initiative. Now is not the time for the program to lapse or pass short-term extensions. A long-term, clear plan for America's workers is essential. Thank you for your past leadership and your consideration of our thoughts on this key issue.

Sincerely,

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